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ABSTRACT

Noting the increasing use of out of school care (school-age care outside of normal school hours) in Scotland, this report reviews research on : care-focused provision and study support. Considered in the review were 33 reports referring to work in the United Kingdom, 3 referring to Scandinavian practice, and 1 report on U.S. research. The report examines what out-of-school care is, who provides it, who uses it, the benefits for children and their parents, and implications for Scottish education. The report notes that care-focused programs offer a wide range of play activities, while study support activities vary widely. The largest single provider of out-of-school child care were voluntary sector organizations. Out-of-school child care costs and staffing levels varied widely. Schools provided most of the study support programs and typically employed a project manager and staff from the schools involved, in addition to other teachers and non-school staff. Parents who used care-focused provision tended to work or study full- or part-time. Some study support programs were targeted for students with special needs. A major benefit of care-focused provision was that it enabled parents to enter or extend work or training. Evidence of benefits from study support programs was inconclusive, with many programs not evaluated and others manifesting problems of selection bias. Claims for benefits related mostly to personal and social development rather than to academic performance. A range of different services were provided across the European Union, with publicly-funded school-age child care rarely offered, except in Denmark and Sweden. The report concludes with acknowledgement that little is known about the quality of out-of-school child care and that additional research is needed. (Contains 51 references.) (KB)

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The Scottish Council for Research in Education

# Out of School Care

## A Brief Review of the Literature

*Heather Malcolm*
*Valerie Wilson*
*Julia Davidson*

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# Out of School Care

## A Brief Review of the Literature

*Heather Malcolm*
*Valerie Wilson*
*Julia Davidson*

The Scottish Council for
Research in Education

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# Executive Summary

The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) commissioned the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) to review the literature on out of school care in order to inform the Executive of research already undertaken and help determine whether further research was needed. The review was conducted between March and May 2001 with the aim of reporting on current and recent research (completed in the last 10 years). UK literature was the main focus but some reference to Europe and Scandinavia has been made. Given the policy interest in 'wrap-around' care some research into the pre-school age group has also been included.

The review addressed the following questions:

1. What is out of school care?
2. Who provides out of school care?
3. Who uses out of school care?
4. What are the benefits for children and their parents?
5. What are the implications for Scottish education?

## Definition and nature of out of school care

A clear definition of what formal out of school care is does not emerge from the literature as a whole. This review defines it as care for children of school age which covers periods outwith standard school hours. Within this very broad definition it can be sub-divided on the grounds of its purpose, which may be to provide care, take achievement further, or both.

Limited research into care-focused provision suggests that out of school clubs offer a wide range of activities which children enjoy as play, although older children feel they are babyish. The most often used childcare sessions correspond with normal school hours, but childcare was also taken up at non-standard times. Most projects set up under the Out Of School Childcare Initiative provided after-school care.

Study support activities varied widely, summer schools tending to emphasise personal and social development and others a broad range of school subjects. Some targeted pupils with special needs, but others did not target. Sessions were usually held at lunchtime and after school. The length of summer schools varied from five to 21 days.

## Provision and cost of out of school care

The range of informal and formal out of school care providers was wide. No one sector dominated formal provision, but the largest single provider comprised voluntary sector organisations. Existing research suggests that employer-run child care schemes are uncommon, but research focusing on employers' roles in childcare is sparse.

In England and Wales Training Enterprise Councils were thought to have increased the provision of out of school childcare places through the Out of School Childcare Grant. Equivalent research for Scotland was not found.

Childcare scheme costs varied widely across the UK, as did staffing levels, which were a major cost element. Staff training was a particularly expensive investment. In Scotland the national average staff level was around 5.5, but lower in rural areas. Wages across the UK ranged from £3.50–£7 an hour and about half the schemes used unpaid help. Parent fees ranged from 50p–£10 an hour and from £15.05–£29.50 a week, with before-school and holiday places being more expensive than after-school places. Some schemes offered concessions. About a third of parents had difficulty paying the fees and some would cease using childcare if they rose. Premises were often schools, but their nature varied and the research contains little information about their cost, though many schemes paid nothing. Although many schemes were viable, it was doubted whether all could be sustained.

Either singly or in partnership, schools provided most study support schemes. Typically they had a project manager and employed staff from the schools involved as well as other teachers and non-school staff. About half employed pupil mentors. Local authorities often gave guidance and day to day help as well as funding, equipment and accommodation, and most evaluated their schools' schemes. No research focused specifically on the costs of study support, but research into summer pilots found that although adult helpers were often unpaid, staffing was an expensive item, as were ICT costs. As with other forms of out of school care, the research points to the need for schemes to consider long-term viability, devising continuity strategies and ways to optimise funding.

## Use of out of school care

Parents who used care-focused provision tended to work or study, either full or part time. They were often single, with mothers being most likely to make childcare arrangements. Most preferred informal childcare from other family members, but many considered that out of school care clubs were the best of the formal alternatives. Satisfaction with childcare arrangements was very high, though it dropped in relation to care for older children and holiday club hours.

Most parents hoped for quality in childcare. Views of this changed with the age of the children and the type of care but some parents of young children hoped their children would make educational progress while being cared for. Children had a different view of quality; they saw out of school club premises as drab, uncomfortable and uninspiring, and thought that their own views were not taken into account. They wanted staff to shout less when children showed 'challenging behaviour' and older children thought staff and activities focused more on the younger ones.

Parents saw access to childcare as dependent on its affordability, its proximity to home or work and the hours it covered. Demand for care-focused out of school provision, especially for breakfast clubs, was high; unmet demand was

highest in the lowest income groups. Few out of school care clubs catered for children in low income families, ethnic minorities or children with disabilities. Childcare places were least readily available for children of 13 years and above and use of childcare decreased as children grew older. Out of school childcare clubs were found to have a strong impact on the labour market, leading to lower percentages of parents not working and higher percentages of parents entering full time work, working longer or being promoted.

Local authorities used childcare when they bought independent day care as an alternative, an extension or a substitute to local authority provision, usually for children of three years and under, to give families short term crisis support.

With respect to study support schemes, takeup varied, but the Playing for Success initiative was particularly popular. Some headteachers claimed they did not target their schemes, but other research suggests that schemes targeted pupils with specific needs.

## Benefits of out of school care

A major benefit of care-focused provision was found to be that it enabled parents to enter or extend work or training. Some parents felt their employment and training opportunities had improved, others that the quality of their work improved and others stated that they had fewer unplanned absences. Evidence for other kinds of benefits is weak.

Evidence of the benefits to be gained from study support is inconclusive. Either monitoring and evaluation of schemes was found to be uncommon, or personal and social development was evaluated rather than academic performance; several studies highlight the problems of selection bias. Claims for benefits related to personal and social development (PSD) include improved pupil attitudes, especially in respect of increased motivation for reading and mathematics, improved self-esteem and social skills, encouragement to move into post-compulsory education, and improved teacher-pupil relationships. With regard to achievement, some teachers and parents noticed improvements in pupils' ICT and study skills, and parents felt study centres helped with mathematics, reading, writing and homework. Some regular homework club attenders improved GCSE grades. Out of school learning projects supporting children's transfer from primary to secondary schools were claimed to be successful, as were school-school and school-organisation partnerships.

Conditions for success included ensuring clear expectations, careful planning, the use of enthusiastic staff with appropriate skills, entering into partnership, giving study support a high school profile and ensuring individual and immediate help for students. Rewards and incentives can have a motivating effect. One study suggested that it helps to study in an out of school setting, although another warned that some students flourish in a school environment.

## The international literature

A range of different services provided opportunities for out of school hours activities across the European Union, but overall the provision of publicly-funded school-age childcare places was low, especially in rural areas.

Denmark and Sweden are exceptions, publicly-funded childcare places for school-aged children being a statutory requirement on local authorities. In Scandinavia childcare as care and childcare as school support had come close together, school roles broadening to offer an increasingly integrated service. In Sweden, leisure centres most often provided care for 6- to 9-year-olds. They stayed open all year, with hours to suit parents. Childcare demand in Sweden was increasing and most children were receiving some form of childcare. In 1998 costs amounted to 14% of Swedish local authorities' total costs, but there has been little systematic evaluation of the costs and benefits of such provision, and cuts have led to a public debate of the quality of public childcare.

A review of extended day and after school programs in the US defines three types related to out of school care: daycare programs for pre-school to 3rd graders, which emphasise recreational and cultural activities; after-school programs for 5- to 18-year-olds, which emphasise academic and non-academic activities, and school-based academic extended day programs which relate directly to school work. Information about five after-school programs, all targeting pupils with specific needs, has been included in the current Review. No information about program providers or costs was available. Evaluations of all five showed improved performance in their areas of focus, which included reading, mathematics, PSD and computer skills. Some participants claimed they felt safer, had more access to resources, liked school more, aspired to continue education and were less likely to join gangs, and parents felt children were safe and being encouraged to study. The reviewers warn that the benefits should be viewed with caution, however, because existing after-school schemes varied enormously, research was limited and selection bias precluded conclusions.

## Implications

The widespread nature of out of school childcare has led research to target particular areas which make it hard to draw out overall findings. Much research has concentrated on issues of supply and demand, benefits and on what contributes to success; little is known about quality in out of school childcare, yet this issue is important if provision is to be broadened.

In spite of very low running costs some childcare schemes struggle to survive, especially in low-income areas. It might help to know more, both about the nature and level of employer partnership in provision and ways it can be encouraged, and the strategies for sustainability employed by viable projects.

There is a possibility of unmet demand in relation to childcare for older children, children from ethnic minorities and children with disabilities. Parents also want childcare to be available, not only during after-school hours, but early in the day

and during holiday periods. Given current moves to bring care and education together, making greater use of schools as care providers could be a way of meeting demand for care.

More, and more rigorous, research into the benefits of out of school childcare is needed. In relation to the benefits of study support in particular, few studies have been able to establish that the results of study support derive from that support and nothing else.

# 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the Review

Out of school care is an expanding area for school-age children of working parents. In particular, the Government is encouraging the expansion of out of school clubs by the injection of over £25 million in Scotland through the New Opportunities Fund. With resources from the Scottish Executive, local authorities have been asked to work in partnership with the voluntary and private sectors to provide and help sustain part time early years education and childcare provision. The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) asked the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) to review the literature on Out of School Care in order to inform the Executive of research already undertaken and help determine whether further research is needed.

## 1.2 Aims and scope

The overall aim of the Review is to search and report on current and recent research, predominantly in the UK, but with some reference to European and Scandinavian literature. The main emphasis is on out of school care for children of school age, but given the policy interest in 'wrap-around' care some research into the pre-school age group has been included.

Five research questions have been applied to the literature. They are

1. What is out of school care?
2. Who provides out of school care?
3. Who uses out of school care?
4. What are the benefits for children and their parents?
5. What are the implications for Scottish education?

## 1.3 Search method

In addition to an early search of the SCRE library, the following terms were used to search the British Educational Index (BEI), the Educational Research in Scotland Database (ERSDAT), the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and the Internet:

Extended school day; Day care clubs; Out of school care; Out of school club; After school care; After school club; Childcare; Wraparound care; After school education; After school programme; Compensatory education; Extracurricular activities; School day care.

In total, the first search yielded 2,670 articles, most of them categorised under 'extracuricular activities' and 'after school programme' with substantial numbers coming from 'after school education', 'school day care' and 'extended school day'. Many were North American studies which, given that US literature was not included within our remit, were largely discarded. Many others were project descriptions rather than research studies and again many were

discounted, as were research studies of poor quality (drawing on very limited data, for example).

Eventually we scanned 82 articles in detail, most reporting research but a few of which were policy documents. We have reported on 33 articles referring to work in the UK (17 focusing on childcare generally and 16 on study support specifically), 3 articles which have relevance to Scandinavian practice and 1 which draws on US research. Although our remit did not include US literature, this is so vast that we felt the inclusion of some findings from Fashola's careful review (Fashola, 1998) was justified and would be found interesting. Within the body of UK literature, we are particularly indebted to a substantial programme of work in the area of out of school hours learning activities being carried out at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). This includes a large-scale longitudinal evaluation of the New Opportunities Fund programme which has yet to be completed (running between 2000–2003).

## 1.4 Organisation of the Review

Given the many terms used in relation to childcare and the often confusing use of similar words for different types of provision, for the purposes of this Review we have reported research under either of two broad categories: 'care-focused provision' or 'study support'.

Our investigation of out of school care has taken this to mean care alone or care combined with education which is provided outside of standard school hours for children of school age. However, to address the interest in 'wraparound' care we have also included comment on research into care for children of pre-school age; we have tried always to make it clear when a study was conducted in relation to this age group. We have concentrated on formal care provision, with reference where appropriate to informal childcare.

This Review has seven sections, of which this is the first. Section 2 considers the question of what out of school care means and gives definitions which the Review uses in subsequent sections. Sections 3 to 5 present UK literature and address three of the remaining research questions listed above. Hence Section 3, 'Who Provides Out Of School Care?' examines findings about the provision of out of school care, including its cost and funding basis, Section 4, 'Who Uses Out of School Care?' explores what is known about these users and what they want from it, and Section 5, 'What are the Benefits of Out Of School Care?' considers what parents and children are thought to have gained by it. It also highlights the inconclusive nature of some of the evidence. Section 6 presents some findings from the international literature on out of school care. Because we found relatively little that was both accessible and relevant to this Review, this section is brief, but as far as possible has been organised to address the research questions. As stated above, we have made some, slight, reference to US literature. Section 7, Implications for Scottish Education, comments on what seem to us to be important issues arising from the Review.

# 2: What is Out of School Care?

## 2.1 Terms used in the literature

There is a plethora of terms in use with regard to out of school childcare. In the UK alone the literature refers to 'school provision', 'out of school learning activities', 'out of school lesson time', 'homework clubs', 'breakfast clubs' and more, while in articles originating in the United States 'extended day', 'curriculum enrichment' and 'curriculum extension' are common phrases. All are types of out of school care in the sense that all take place out of normal school hours and in all of them children are under some form of care. All refer to types of formal provision, on which all the research we uncovered was targeted, although as Section 3 makes clear, most childcare provision across the range of pre- and school-aged children is informal.

Few researchers offered clear definitions of out of school care, although given the situation described above definitions would be helpful. Exceptions include Smith and Barker (2000) who state that for their own work

> Out of school care is defined as providing childcare to groups of children aged between five and twelve years, after school and during the school holidays, in settings explicitly offering creative play opportunities.
>
> Smith and Barker (2000)

In this statement, Smith and Barker use four defining features: the numbers of children cared for (groups), their ages (school age) the times when care is offered (out of school times) and, importantly, the purpose of the care (the offering of creative play opportunities). Callender (2000) clarifies that the settings of out of school care need not be physically out of school as they include 'school care, after-school care, and holiday schemes'.

While Callender adds nothing about the purpose of out of school care that will take Smith and Barker's statement further, she further notes that out of school *clubs* are

> an extension of learning activities provided by a school for its pupils.
>
> Callender (2000)

Such clubs are exempt from registration under the 1989 Children Act. The implication is that they are not a form of out of school care.

In our view there is considerable potential for confusion in use of the word 'club', as it appears both in the context of learning activity, and in the context of care lacking an overt focus of this nature. The former is exemplified not only by Callender but also by the DfEE (1998) whose definition of study support includes homework clubs and study clubs; and in the case of the latter, both Children in Scotland (1998b) and Smith and Barker (2000) associate various kinds of clubs with provision whose primary purpose is to provide care.

From these examples it can be inferred that, strictly, out of school care excludes study support. For the purposes of the current review, however, we have included research into this area. One reason is that study support schemes of various kinds have generated much research which it would seem perverse to

ignore. Another is that in all practical senses, when they are studying in out of standard school hours under the supervision of responsible adults, children are under a form of care.

A third reason, however, is that the distinction between care and education is becoming increasingly blurred, and this seems to us to be an important development which omission of the research into study support would hide. The concept of breakfast clubs is an illustration of this blurring: according to Street (1999) they are 'one example of out-of-school care, where providing the meal of breakfast is a core part of the club's operation, alongside the provision of a safe, adult-supervised environment'. However, claims have been made that eating breakfast helps raise children's achievement through ensuring adequate nutrition (Powney *et al*, 2000). If breakfast clubs are set up in hopes that this will be the case, then using the DfEE definition of study support it would be possible to argue that they have an educational function.

For the purposes of the current review, the conceptual map of out of school care looks like this:

**OUT OF SCHOOL CARE**

**Promoting Achievement Focus**

UK: Study Support Schemes *which include*

- Homework clubs
- Study clubs
- Mentoring
- Residentials
- Summer schools/ 'children's universities'/ holiday schemes
- Help with key skills
- Space and support for coursework and exam. revision
- Learning about learning
- Family learning
- Sports/games/adventurous activities
- Creative ventures
- Volunteering opportunities
- Particular interest opportunities
- Community service opportunities

Curriculum extension (esp. US)

Curriculum enrichment (esp. US)

*May be*

formal/ informal

structured/ unstructured

on/ off school premises

before/after school holiday

**Childcare Focus**

Parent care

Other family members care

Friends' care

Childminder care

Pre-school nurseries

School nurseries

Day nurseries

Sponsored daycare

Playgroups

Out of school care clubs

Holiday play schemes

Kids' clubs

Breakfast clubs

## 2.2 Definition of out of school childcare used in this Review

The definition of out of school childcare to which we are working in this review, then, is that it is care for children of school age which covers periods outwith standard school hours. Within this very broad definition it can be divided into two groups on the grounds of its purpose, which may be to provide care, take achievement further, or both; in this respect our definition differs from that of Smith and Barker (op. cit.)

## 2.3 A definition of study support

Thanks to the Department for Education and Employment (1998), 'study support' is much easier to pin down. The Department gives a clear definition applicable in the UK, saying that study support is:

> learning activity outside normal lessons which young people take part in voluntarily. Study support is, accordingly, an inclusive term, embracing many activities - with many names and many guises. Its purpose is to improve young people's motivation, build their self-esteem and help them to become more effective learners. Above all it aims to raise achievement.
>
> DfEE (1998)

The concept is stated to include homework clubs (facilities and support), study clubs (linked to/ extending curriculum subjects), help with key skills (literacy, numeracy, ICT), sports, games, adventurous activities, creative ventures, residentials, space and support for coursework and exam revision, volunteering opportunities, particular interests opportunities (eg science, law, archaeology), mentoring by adults or other pupils, learning about learning (thinking skills, accelerated learning) and community service (eg crime prevention, environmental clubs). Later the document adds the notion of 'family learning' through a case study. Further, study support is stated to be for all young people, primary and secondary.

This definition is somewhat wide-ranging, however, which is implicitly acknowledged in the DfEE's stressing that the 'major strengths' of study support are its diversity and the fact that people choose to take part. Mason (1999), in a paper given at the National Foundation for Education Research annual conference, hints at the need for greater clarity and explains that the term had grown out of a long school tradition of extra-curricular activity:

> 'Study support' is something of a new term, and we need to be clear as to what it means and the sorts of activities encompassed by it. Most schools have a long tradition of providing their pupils with out-of-school learning activities. The most common types of such activities are team sports, creative arts ... and homework clubs. Ten or more years ago ... a sizeable number of schools abandoned or significantly reduced this type of provision. While some of these schools have now revived study support activities, others have not, and the general picture across primary, secondary and special schools in England is patchy with some schools providing a wider and varied programme of study support activities and other schools a very limited one. Recently, the Government has placed a new emphasis on this type of activity, under the banner of 'study support'.

Mason (1999)

From this, Mason asks how the new concept of study support differs from what has gone before. According to him, the main difference is its *emphasis*:

> In place of a somewhat ad hoc approach to provision, dependent on the goodwill of individual staff members, the Government wants to see a coherent programme of activities that address pupils' needs and that supports what goes on in the classroom.
>
> Mason (1999)

Structure and purpose are therefore characteristics of key importance in determining the nature of out of school care generally and out of school learning activities more particularly.

In spite of the key characteristics of study support as set out in the DfEE publication quoted above, Sharp *et al* (1999), reviewing opinion and research contained in 62 mostly UK-based studies, comment that study support is hard to define because it is evolving. They suggest two sub-groupings: curriculum extension and curriculum enrichment. Curriculum extension schemes are the most directly related to academic study, and include arrangements such as homework clubs, study skills sessions and revision schemes. Curriculum enrichment is less directly related to academic study and usually seeks to broaden opportunities, develop skills in personal and social development (PSD), increase learning motivation and enhance self-esteem. It includes arts-focused opportunities, outward bound arrangements and so on.

In the UK, then, we see study support as one branch of out-of-school childcare. It can be almost any activity that is structured for learning, which children engage in only if they want, and which aims to help raise their achievement, improve their motivation, and build their self-esteem. Although both curriculum extension and curriculum enrichment schemes might claim all three aims, curriculum extension study focuses particularly on the first, and curriculum enrichment more particularly on the second and third. The terms 'curriculum extension' and 'curriculum enrichment' do not seem to be widely used in the UK.

## 2.4 The changing purposes of out of school childcare

At the most basic of levels, childcare seeks to provide a safe place where children can be looked after by responsible adults: what in the United States has been called a 'safe haven' (Fashola, 1998). Parents with children need the service of such safe havens if they are to engage in work or study, a fact recognised in England and Wales by the Out Of School Childcare Grant Initiative which strongly emphasised the role played by childcare in helping parents into work. Many of the UK articles reviewed relate to the context of this Initiative, whose purpose according to O'Brien and Dench (1996) was:

> to improve the quantity and quality of out-of-school childcare in order to facilitate increased labour market participation, among those who wish to combine work with family life, by parents of school-aged children. The grant is intended to assist with the start-up costs of new schemes caring

> for children out of school hours, or support the creation of new places at existing schemes. Its purpose is to cover initial capital costs and support operating costs for a maximum of one year.
>
> O'Brien and Dench (1996)

The Initiative emphasised the relationship between affordable childcare and entry into the labour market, and much of the literature relating to childcare provision focuses on the viability of schemes, their effectiveness in helping parents into work and, in England and Wales, the effectiveness of the Training Enterprise Councils charged with delivering them (eg O'Brien and Dench, 1996; Dench and O'Regan, 1997; Gatenby, 1998; trueGRIT, 1998, Children in Scotland, 1998b).

In this respect childcare aims to meet a highly practical requirement. However, although research into parents' perceptions of childcare tends to reveal high levels of satisfaction (eg O'Brien and Dench, 1996; Hinds and Park, 2000), it also illustrates that parents of even very young children also hope that while they are in childcare their children will make advances in their education (Long *et al*, 1996).

The provision of opportunities for such advances implies some structuring of the time a child spends in childcare, but the extent to which it should be associated with this, particularly where very young children are concerned, is a matter for debate, as Munton *et al* (2000) point out; and Street (1999), closing her article about breakfast clubs, comments that there are 'fundamental questions' to be asked about the amount of time that children now spend in formal organised activities. Where does time for home and play fit in?

The UK literature shows a distinct shift in emphasis after 1998 when the DfEE launched 'Extending Opportunity: A national framework for study support'. Most of the UK articles relating to study support date from this time and, as is pointed out in a Children in Scotland factsheet (Children in Scotland, 1998b), there was then an increased interest in childcare of quality:

> Childcare has been given higher Government priority, with Ministerial recognition of the value of good quality services as a means of helping to promote social inclusion of all children. Councils are being given greater responsibility for developing childcare provision across Scotland.
>
> Children in Scotland (1998)

This concern with quality applies, not only to policy on care for school-aged children but also to policy for pre-school level care too, where the Scottish Executive Education Department recognises that needs are varied:

> Some parents of pre-school children may simply seek part-time pre-school education. Others will need additional childcare, for part or all of the day. Some may seek integrated education and childcare services in the one place; for others, it may be preferable to access pre-school education and childcare separately, perhaps using the services of a childminder or nanny for the latter. The government's central objective is to ensure there is a range of high quality services available to meet these varied needs.
>
> Menlowe and Morgan, 1999

Quality and quantity are seen as going hand in hand and the authors note that various initiatives were under way to promote quality provision.

## 2.5 Care-focused provision: activities and hours covered

The literature has relatively little to say with respect to the activities offered in childcare situations that do not also have study support intentions. Moss (1998), surveying 111 local authorities in a study conducted for the DfEE to find out what information they held about childcare provision, concluded that few authorities had conducted a detailed analysis of how current provision matched the need for services. What information there was tended to be patchy and to be statistical in nature, concerned with factors such as the numbers of places available in different types of schemes. Munton *et al* (2000), who focused on good practice in care for very young children, found that most local authorities in Scotland did not have systematic, evidence-based descriptions of such practice – rather, descriptions were subjective.

A study of children's perceptions of childcare, however, offers some insight into what happens in out of school care clubs in the Kids' Clubs network. Conducted by Smith and Barker (2000) working in 25 such clubs, it drew data from 70 children ranging from four to 12 years of age. The study found that most clubs seemed to offer a wide range of activities (eg painting, football, cooking, off-site trips) in a wide range of settings which most often included schools (48% of all schemes) but also community centres, nurseries, youth clubs, church halls and purpose built premises, although these were relatively rare. Most of the children enjoyed the clubs as places to play freely rather than undergo structured learning: 96% did not want to do homework, and over half the children (especially the girls) liked the staff partly because they allowed them more freedom to play and were more flexible in their approach than other adults. However, Smith and Barker found that older children were less happy than the under-nines, feeling that the activities were babyish. They wanted clubs which gave them their own space and provided more appropriate activities.

We found little information in the literature about breakfast clubs. Street (1999) suggests that this may be because much of the research or statistical data gathering about out of school provision has focused on 'after school' schemes. She comments that breakfast clubs are popular with children, parents and teachers. Yet they seem to be relatively rare, Keys *et al* (1999) finding that few schools in England and Wales provide them (10% of primary schools and only 3% of secondary schools).

Research into childcare for children of pre-school years completed by Long *et al* (1996) suggests that parents' choices of childcare are shaped by affordability and convenience. Hinds and Park (2000) surveyed the use of all forms of childcare in Scotland and found that although the most widely used childcare sessions corresponded with normal school hours there was a 'substantial minority of families' who also used childcare at non-standard times. The hours covered by childcare are therefore important, but the studies conducted for the current review give a mixed picture of this.

One, a study of the childcare requirements of students in seven Scottish further and higher education institutions (Children in Scotland, 1998a) suggests a mismatch between course study hours and the childcare offered by those institutions. A study of out of school care clubs carried out in rural Scotland (Children in Scotland, 1998b) found that most of the clubs were only open after school. On the other hand, a Strathclyde study conducted by Frontline Management Consultants (1998) found that in most of the 73 schemes funded under the Glasgow Out Of School Childcare Initiative projects were open during the summer and in term-time, and that many more were providing breakfast club cover from 8 or 9am or even earlier. trueGRIT (1998), investigating parents' use of out of school childcare in 27 centres in Strathclyde, found that most parents were very happy with the hours when the centres could be used. There is too little evidence here to determine whether there is a difference between provision in Strathclyde and elsewhere; any real differences may lie in provision in rural compared to city environments. However, the former Strathclyde Region was one of the first to combine care and education in the pre-school sector by offering extended day care in its nurseries.

A study conducted for the DfEE (Gatenby, 1998) suggests that most projects set up under the Out Of School Childcare Initiative took place in after school time. Surveying 145 schemes, it found that almost all the schemes offered after school places, two thirds offered holiday places and only a third offered pre-school places (ie covering periods before the school day began, not places for children too young to attend school). Pre-school opening hours tended to be from 7.30 to 8am while after-school hours drew to a close between 5.30 and 6pm. Callender's investigation of childcare throughout the age range (2000) found that hours of care varied according to provision type; hence nurseries and childminders provided at least seven hours of care a day, and playgroups and Out Of School Childcare Initiative projects provided between three and five hours.

## 2.6 Study support: aims, activities and hours

As has already been stated, study support schemes can be regarded as a sub-set of childcare, and their purpose is to raise the achievement of children in school, improve their motivation and build their self-esteem. Some researchers (Sharp *et al*, 1999b) classify schemes having the first of these purpose as curriculum extension, and the latter two as curriculum enrichment. Mason *et al* (2000), surveying 25 summer school pilot schemes, found that although their purposes varied, all these schemes put a strong emphasis on the development of self-confidence and self-esteem, independent learning and motivation. Hutchinson *et al* (2001) found the same in their study of 32 English summer school pilots, where attempts were made to foster these qualities through outdoor activities which had a residential element.

Many projects aimed to lift achievement in specific areas. The literature cites examples of projects focusing on a broad range of school subjects including ICT, literacy and numeracy (Keys *et al*, 1999; Keys and Wilkinson, 1999; Sharp *et al*,

1999a). Sports and creative arts activities were particularly popular – more so than homework or revision clubs (Mason, 1999). A newspaper article by Henderson (2000) describes the start-up of a North Lanarkshire 'co-ordinated, authority-wide out of hours music, arts and sports programme' for primary and secondary pupils'. However, the literature also shows that schemes (especially summer schools) occasionally go beyond these subjects to less conventional learning areas such as a drivers' hazard perception course (Mason *et al*, 1999) and Keys *et al* (op. cit.) found much variation among local authorities in the number of activities they supported. Some summer school pilots aimed to ease the transition from school to working life, and perhaps for that reason included work-oriented activities such as construction skills, an introduction to the armed forces and work experience (Hutchinson *et al*, 2001). While some schemes were not targeted at specific groups (Keys *et al*, 1999), others aimed to attract children with special needs (including gifted pupils), ethnic minority pupils and those who were felt to be socially disadvantaged and under-achievers (Mason *et al*, 2000; Keys and Wilkinson, 1999; Keys *et al*, 1999).

Particular examples of the latter are schemes set up under the 'Playing for Success' national initiative, established by the DfEE in partnership with the Premier and Nationwide Leagues, their clubs and LEAs. The Initiative aims to contribute to rising standards, especially in urban areas, by establishing out-of-school-hours Study Support Centres in or near professional football clubs. The intention is to use 'the medium and environment of football to support work with literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and provide facilities for pupils to complete their homework' (Sharp *et al*, 1999a) and the Initiative focuses on the needs of underachieving youngsters in Key Stages 2 and 3. It puts strong emphasis on improving attitudes and motivation to learn. It may be of interest to note a Highland secondary school's recent plan to start a three-year 'Out-of-Hours Literacy Program' funded through the New Opportunities Fund (Simmons, 2001).

There seems to be little research about the timing of study support sessions. The strongest evidence comes from Keys *et al* (1999) who, conducting a wide-ranging survey for the DfEE of over 1000 head teachers in mainstream secondary and primary as well as special schools, found that lunchtime and after school sessions were the norm. Study support activity rarely took place at other times. An unpublished Scottish study by Gallacher (1996) of a project in his own school suggests that the after-school hours of 3.30 to 4.30 or even 5pm, Mondays to Thursdays inclusive, were too long. The length of summer schools can vary, running for anything from 5 to 21 days (Hutchinson *et al*, 2001) but the average among the 32 pilot programmes evaluated was about a week. Many of these pilots were run several times.

## 2.7 Summary

The literature gives few clear definitions of out of school care but it is generally taken to be formal. Many terms to describe forms of care are in use, however, and definitions would be helpful. It can be seen as having two main functions: it

must always be regarded as providing a place of safety and security for children at those times before and after school when parents cannot themselves look after them, but through the provision of structured learning activities, now categorised as 'study support' in the UK, it may also aim to help further children's achievement. Out of school childcare may fulfil only the first of these functions, in which case it is seen principally as a means of freeing parents to enter work or study, or it may combine the two; there is some evidence to suggest that parents of very young children using childcare hope for the latter. Government interest in quality applies to childcare across the age range, ie not only to out of school care but to care for children of pre-school years also. The definition of out of school childcare taken for this review is that it is care for children of school age which covers periods outwith standard school hours. Within this very broad definition it can be divided into two groups according to whether it aims to provide care or take achievement further.

With respect to care-focused provision, there is little research information about activities. Out of school care clubs offered a wide range which children enjoyed as play, although older children felt the activities were babyish. Parents' choices of childcare were found to be affected by affordability and convenience, and though the most frequent use was made of childcare sessions that corresponded to normal school hours, childcare was also used and needed at non-standard times. Most projects set up under the Out Of School Childcare Initiative were after-school projects.

Activities in study support schemes varied widely. Summer schools tended to emphasise personal and social development and activities going beyond the school curriculum, often outdoor activities with a residential element. Other schemes focused on a broad range of school subjects, especially ICT, literacy and numeracy. Some schemes targeted specific pupils, often those with special needs, but others did not target. With respect to timing, the norm for study support sessions was lunchtime and after school; summer schools varied in length from 5 to 21 days.

# 3: Who Provides Out of School Care?

## 3.1 Care-focused provision

We found 11 studies with research-based information about out of school childcare providers, six covering schemes in England and Wales and five, schemes in Scotland. Most suggest that childcare provision across the range of pre- and school-age children is most likely to be provided informally, but that the most frequent formal out of school childcare provision is made by voluntary sector organisations.

Three of the largest studies were conducted in England and Wales for the DfEE (Callender, 2000; Gatenby, 1998; O'Brien and Dench, 1996) and a fourth large study in Scotland for the Scottish Executive Education Department (Hinds and Park, 2000). They report a wide range of formal and informal providers of childcare (Hinds and Park, for example, list registered/unregistered childminders, live-in daily nannies, baby-sitters, nursery centres/schools, nursery classes attached to primary schools, day nurseries, playgroups, family centres and out of school clubs; ex-spouses, ex-partners, child's grandparents, older siblings, other relatives, friends and neighbours), not all of which, clearly, provide out of school care because many look after children too young for school.

Although Callender notes that in her study 'no one sector dominated the provision of out of school care', both her findings and Gatenby's report voluntary sector organisations as the largest single group providing out of school childcare: in Callender's study they comprised 36% of her very large sample of 1300 providers, and in Gatenby's, 41% of the 145 schemes. In the research carried out by O'Brien and Dench voluntary sector organisation providers formed 25% of the sample, a proportion they shared with small businesses.

The smaller studies tend to reflect similar findings. Smith and Barker (2000) found that voluntary groups were the most frequent providers of their 25 out of school childcare clubs in south-east England and Frontline Management Consultants (1998) report that parent-led voluntary groups managed most of the 31 Strathclyde projects included in their research. The situation might be different in rural Scotland as Children in Scotland (1998b), investigating the circumstances of 81 out of school clubs in rural Scotland, found that just over half the clubs were run by parent committees. Most of the rest, however, were provided by voluntary groups.

Callender's large study (Callender, 2000) found that the public sector (which would include schools, further education colleges, universities and local authorities, all of which are separately named as providers in other studies) was, after the voluntary organisations, the next most usual provider of childcare and accounted for 31% of her sample. After them come small private businesses (Callender, 2000; Smith and Barker, 2000; Gatenby, 1998; O'Brien and Dench, 1996), parent committees and the churches (Children in Scotland, 1998b; Gatenby, 1998). It is not clear how frequently employers set up and run out of school childcare schemes. Many researchers have no category for them (which in itself might suggest that employers are infrequent providers) and Gatenby

(1998) notes that in his study there was only one instance of childcare being employer-provided. Smith and Barker (2000) and O'Brien and Dench (1996) include employers in their lists of providers, but in both cases they are among the least common.

Some further and higher education institutions offer childcare. However, Children in Scotland (1998a) found that in comparison with further education colleges, universities provided greater provision for younger children, had longer opening hours during term time and were more likely to be open during holidays.

It is perhaps worth noting that not all the studies we reviewed clarified who the providers of care were. For example, Statham *et al* (2000), investigating the use of independent day care services for children in need, name different types of care such as playgroups, nurseries and childminders, to which Children in Scotland (1998c) add toddler groups and after-school care generally, but neither study states who runs them.

So far the studies mentioned have been chiefly concerned with who runs and delivers childcare. Referring to a more overarching level of provision, O'Brien and Dench (1996) surveyed 82 TECs (Training Enterprise Councils) which were charged with delivering the Out of School Childcare Grant in England and Wales (a task given to LECs or Local Enterprise Councils in Scotland). They found considerable variation in the speed with which schemes had been set up and the ways these were organised. In early 1995 most (11,000) childcare places set up under the scheme were after school with 8,000 holiday places and 4,000 pre-school. A potential 13,000 places in total were in development; the researchers state that 'the Initiative has considerably increased the provision of out-of-school childcare places across the country as a whole'. TECs retained day to day management responsibility in over half the schemes, about a quarter managed in partnership with other organisations and the rest sub-contracted. Most TECs had little or no experience of childcare provision so partnership was valuable, but some tensions between childcare and business orientations had arisen and 'It was clear that for the successful establishment of schemes, the importance of contacts with a range of organisations, and the ability to mobilise a variety of resources and networks, could not be underestimated.'

In the Scottish context, Munton *et al* (2000), surveying all Scottish local authorities for evidence of good practice, note that responsibility for delivering good quality early years childcare services was found to lie with Childcare Partnerships, Education Departments and Social Work. They also comment on the unfavourable consequences for childcare in Scotland of split responsibilities within the Scottish Office, stating that public funding for education far outstrips funding for day care, training for care workers falls 'well short of that enjoyed by teachers' and that 'a fragmented service offering variable standards of care' has been created. It should be noted that to some extent this situation has now been rectified with the creation of a new Department for Children which combines social work and education; and some local authorities, eg Stirling, now have directors of 'children's services' rather than directors of education.

### *3.1.1 Costs and funding*

Three of the studies closely considered the running costs of childcare schemes (Children in Scotland, 1998b; Frontline Management Consultants, 1998 and Gatenby, 1998). All gave details of staffing levels, which are clearly a major element of ongoing expenses. Gatenby's finding was that on average schemes employed three part time and one full time worker, while the average in the Strathclyde schemes included in the Frontline Management Consultants survey was 5.5, near the national average. Children in Scotland found an average of only 2.5 part time workers in the rural area schemes reported in their research. Wages were poor generally, but varied from a low of £3.50 an hour for an assistant to £7 for a lead playworker (Children in Scotland, 1998b). Project co-ordinators could expect to receive around £6.68 an hour (Frontline Management Consultants, 1998). Gatenby (1998) also reported that half the schemes used unpaid help.

One of the consequences of such low wages was problems in recruiting and retaining staff, which was reported in four studies (Frontline Management Consultants, 1998, Callender, 2000, Children in Scotland, 1998b and Gatenby, 1998). In Gatenby's study 42% of schemes had such difficulties but in Frontline Management Consultants' research the proportion was as high as two thirds. Callender (2000) points out that the inability to pay staff better leads to inability to recruit suitably qualified people, which in turn has implications for quality.

Quality may be further impaired by scanty staff training. Although O'Brien and Dench (1996) found that schemes had invested considerable resources in training with the result that all schemes had some trained staff, Children in Scotland (1998b), reporting two years later, found that the training for staff working in childcare clubs in rural Scotland tended to be ad hoc, with training at SVQ level the exception. Frontline Management Consultants (1998) identified the cost of training, together with the cost of providing cover for staff engaged in training and limited staff time, as a major barrier to training opportunities.

Another element of a scheme's running expenditure is the cost of its premises. We found little detail about this in the research, however, perhaps because the nature of those premises varied so widely. According to Smith and Barker (2000) they were most often schools (48% of their sample) but could also be community centres, nurseries, youth clubs, church halls or even purpose-built sites. Gatenby (1998) found that 14% of his sample paid nothing for such premises, a proportion that rises to two thirds when those paying subsidised prices are included.

Such data suggests that overall childcare schemes tend to keep running costs low.

With respect to income, in 1996 O'Brien and Dench found that only 2/5 of the schemes had added income from local authorities and charitable trusts to what they received from parents. At that time:

> some schemes were experiencing great difficulty in securing sufficient funding, and were highly reliant on the personal and voluntary efforts of scheme staff and others involved in establishing the schemes to survive financially.
>
> O'Brien and Dench, 1996

Reporting a year later on circumstances in Kent out of school clubs, Dench and O'Regan (1997) comment that managers had limited success raising funds from other sources, being reluctant to impose on parents for fund-raising and finding local employers and charities unresponsive, perhaps in the latter case because out of school clubs were a low priority. However, Gatenby's breakdown (Gatenby, 1998) is that in England and Wales most childcare schemes' income came from parent fees (on average 78%). Nearly half the schemes also received funding from local authorities, and a similar proportion from Training Enterprise Council grants. Over 40% received funding from schools, while funding also came from many other sources. 12% of schemes had not attracted additional funding.

The research shows that fees charged to parents varied enormously. According to Smith and Barker (2000) the range for an hour of after-school care was as wide as from 50p to £10. Frontline Management Consultants quote an average weekly charge of £17.06 (varying from a low of £15.05 in regeneration areas to £22.29 in others) and Hinds and Park (2000) a median weekly rate of £20. Gatenby (1998) found that charges varied according to the time of care, with after-school places costing a weekly average of £18.60 and before-school places, £29.50. Holiday places averaged £50.40. He found that two thirds of schemes offered concessions; in Smith and Barker's research (2000) the proportion offering these was 40%.

We have remarked above on the finding that some schemes were highly reliant on the personal efforts of staff and supporters to survive financially, and there is evidence to suggest that schemes may find it difficult to increase the relatively low fees quoted above. La Valle *et al* (2000) discovered that 36% of parents in England and Wales had difficulty in paying the modest £19 a week asked for, and in a similar Scottish study Hinds and Park (2000) found that 30% had trouble finding the weekly £20. Both these studies sought the reactions of parents to hypothetical increases of 25%: Hinds and Park found that such rises were likely to result in a quarter of childcare users reducing their use of it or dropping it altogether. For La Valle *et al* the figure was a fifth. If fees were to *drop* by the same amount, these two studies suggest that similar proportions would be drawn into using the childcare.

If accurate, such findings suggest that childcare schemes have very narrow margins in which increases in parent fees can help raise income levels. Callender (2000) identifies one of the main barriers to effective childcare provision as the difficulty of charging enough to reflect true costs – parents believed that childcare should be cheap. Yet research findings on scheme viability suggest that income levels do need to be higher in the interests of long term sustainability.

Gatenby (1998) comments in some detail on scheme viability. 65% of the 145 schemes in this study had been viable (expenditure not exceeding income) in the previous accounting year. In the current year, 10% expected to become viable and 71% in total expected viability. Most non-viable schemes missed only by a short mark, but Gatenby points out that 9% expected their income to be considerably less than expenditure. He found that viable schemes differed slightly in several respects from non-viable schemes, being less likely to offer concessions, more likely to be located in higher income areas and more likely to run at higher capacity. They were also more likely to be run by voluntary organisations, and received less help than non-viable schemes, perhaps, Gatenby suggests, because they have more effective managers.

Gatenby found that when the TEC grant had ended it had made no difference to 40% of schemes and that the viable schemes were most likely to say this. 22% had obtained replacement funding (mainly from charities and LAs). 19% had increased fees (by an average of 15%) and 17% had stepped up their fund-raising activities (though fund-raising was only a small part of annual income). The schemes that fared worst tended to be located in low income/ high unemployment areas, but over 3/4 had raised all the money they needed.

In spite of this, doubts about sustainability feature in many of the studies we reviewed. In 1996 O'Brien and Dench warned that, in spite of some examples of schemes approaching viability 'there was a general feeling among informants ... that, particularly in the less affluent areas, some schemes would never achieve viability on the basis of parents' fees alone and would need continued financial support from other sources'. Dench and O'Regan's later study in Kent (Dench and O'Regan, 1997) revealed that eight of the 24 schemes that were no longer receiving TEC funding faced an uncertain future:

> One club, located in an area where the parents could not afford the fees, had closed and three managers reported that they might have to close. In another club fees had been increased, but the manager reported that 'we struggle from month to month'.
>
> Dench and O'Regan (1997)

In 1998 Children in Scotland (1998b) found that all respondents expressed serious concern over lack of long-term funding and most felt that small clubs would continue to need financial support even once they were up and running. Frontline Management Consultants (1998) conclude their assessment of the economic impact of the Glasgow Out of School Care Initiative by commenting that the out of school childcare schemes in the study had shown commitment to sustainability through raising charges and training staff but add that the sustainability focus must continue with financial support being

> targeted to the particular difficulties of a small number of providers and, more generally, on assisting the move from the day to operational to a more strategic view.
>
> Frontline Management Consultants (1998)

Children in Scotland (1998a) point to the importance of childcare affordability to its take-up, warning that additional funding is needed to guarantee adequate

provision, preferably through a more comprehensive childcare strategy on the part of Government which encompasses the needs of parents who study as well as those who work; and this vision of good quality, affordable and accessible childcare in every neighbourhood, from birth until the age of 14, was set out in the Green Paper *Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland* (Cm 3958, May 1998). As yet there is little published research on the effects of this strategy.

## 3.2 Study support

Among the studies addressing issues of study support provision in the UK four stand out: work by Mason *et al* (1999 and 2000), Keys and Wilkinson (1999) and Keys *et al* (1999). These suggest that schools, either singly or in partnership, provide the vast majority of study support schemes in England and Wales. A fifth study (Hutchinson *et al*, 2001) states that most of the 32 summer school pilots evaluated were run either by local authorities or Trusts with which many of these authorities had links. It does not make clear how far or whether schools were involved at the point of delivery.

Evaluating 50 pilot study support schemes for the DfEE, Mason *et al* (1999) revealed that there had been a wide variety of new and extended provision involving primary, secondary and special schools and ranging from single schools to partnerships among schools and with public/private/community organisations.

A companion study (Mason *et al*, 2000) evaluating 25 DfEE-funded summer school pilot schemes, similarly found that these schemes varied in size and scope. Partner organisations included further and higher education institutions including universities, banks, police, football club-based study support centres, local authority departments, faith groups and businesses. These might provide staff, funds, facilities use or resources. Investigating the management structures of the summer school pilots, Mason *et al* found that all had a project manager, supported in the larger schemes by one or more project co-ordinators. Managers typically set up steering groups, contacted schools and partners, decided on the foci of the schemes, recruited staff, approved activities, organised training and dealt with finances. Co-ordinators prepared activities/courses, promoted their parts of the schemes, bought resources, recruited mentors and 'inducted' staff. With regard to content delivery, Mason *et al* found that all the schemes employed staff from their own schools, but some also employed teachers from non-participating schools and about half employed non-school staff (such as higher and further education lecturers, youth workers, people from local businesses). Adult support workers might be learning support assistants, education workers (bilingual support), undergraduates, school administrators and clerical staff. About half the schemes employed pupil mentors who reported that their tasks required good communication skills, patience, self-control, confidence, being approachable and when necessary, assertive: many received specific training.

Other research confirms the centrality of schools in study support provision. From a survey of over 1000 head teachers and 9000 pupils in mainstream secondary and primary schools as well as head teachers in special schools, Keys *et al* (1999) found that 'virtually all the mainstream schools and three-quarters of special schools provided some form of out-of-lesson-time learning activities' (eg 90% provided activities in the broad area of study skills). At the level of delivery, all schools drew on the skills of teachers. Others involved in content delivery were parents (especially in the primary schools), specialist non-teaching staff (in over half the secondary schools but fewer primary), learning support assistants (in over three quarters of the special schools), volunteers (in about a third of all types of schools) and pupils (in 40% of secondary schools).

Keys *et al* also found that schools sometimes subcontracted out delivery of out-of-lesson-time activities, especially study skills, sport, creative arts and childcare. In their study the proportions of schools with such arrangements ranged from 40% (secondary) to 10% (special).

Local authorities often supported schools in their efforts to provide study support. A survey of 103 English education authorities (Keys and Wilkinson, 1999) showed that staff in 72% had been involved in study support activities, usually giving advice but sometimes helping in day to day provision. Further, over 40% had provided funding, equipment or accommodation. Most authorities involved in study support activities also evaluated them.

### *3.2.1 Funding and costs*

As Mason (1999) comments, the Government target with respect to supported study schemes is to establish study support opportunities in at least half of all secondary and special schools and a quarter of all primary schools in the next few years. These are being funded from a near £200 million budget under the National Lottery New Opportunities Fund for the UK from 1999 to 2005. As yet, 2005 is some time off, giving schemes opportunity for long-term planning, but as yet there is little evidence of movement away from dependence on this fund and thus towards long-term sustainability.

Three of the research studies comment overtly on this (Sharp *et al*, 1999a; Mason *et al*, 1999; Keys and Wilkinson, 1999). Sharp *et al*, for example, remark on the need for schemes involved in 'Playing for Success' to consider long-term viability for the centres, further suggesting there is a need to identify sponsorship opportunities and ways to equip the centres with ICT facilities. Mason *et al* (1999) recommend that schools and local authorities devise continuity strategies for limited-duration schemes, and that, together with other organisations, they should optimise funding from the New Opportunities Fund.

Other studies suggest uneasiness about sustainability through findings such as that of Mason *et al* (2000) that few of the 25 summer school pilot schemes featuring in their evaluation had added to DfEE funding, and that although cost-effectiveness depended on recruiting and retaining close to target numbers, take up rates among schemes varied, with some over- and others under-subscribed.

Keys *et al* (1999) found that although some of the 1000+ schools in their survey offering out of lesson time learning activities received external funding, the main sources being charities and local authorities, the maximum proportion receiving it was 41%, usually comprising special schools. Only 14% of mainstream primary schools received it.

We uncovered no research which had focused on the costs of study support schemes. However, Mason *et al* (2000) comment that two thirds of the DfEE funding which summer school pilots received had been spent on staffing. Schools involved in these schemes frequently used their own existing resources (eg musical instruments) but some were bought in especially for the summer school (eg digital cameras). Mason *et al* (1999) add to the picture by stating that many of the 50 pilot study support schemes they evaluated spent a substantial proportion of their budget on ICT, intending to show participants how to use the technology especially in relation to their school and homework. Keys *et al* (1999) found that secondary schools typically used external funding to support study skills, while special schools used it to support care clubs and residentials. Interestingly, they point out that adult helpers were unpaid in over half the schools of all kinds.

## 3.3 Summary

The range of informal and formal out of school care providers was found to be wide. With regard to formal provision, no one sector dominated; however, the largest single provider group comprised voluntary sector organisations. Research including employer-run child care schemes is sparse but what there is suggests such schemes are uncommon. In England and Wales, Training Enterprise Councils were important scheme providers, having been charged with delivering schemes under the Out of School Childcare Grant; they were thought to have considerably increased the provision of out of school childcare places. In Scotland, the problems inherent in a fragmented early years childcare service have, in part, been resolved by the creation of a new Department for Children within the Scottish Executive which combines social work and education and, in some local authorities, Directors of Education have become Directors of Children's Services.

Childcare scheme costs varied, as did staffing levels, which were a major cost element. The national average for staff in Scotland was around 5.5, but much lower in rural areas. Wages across the posts ranged from £3.50 an hour to £7, and about half the schemes used unpaid help. Training was also an expensive investment, and because of this was somewhat ad hoc in some schemes. Premises varied widely, although they were often schools, but the research contains little information about their cost. A substantial percentage of schemes was found to pay nothing.

Fees asked of parents ranged from 50p an hour to £10 an hour and from £15.05 a week in regeneration areas to £29.50 in others. Before-school and holiday places were more expensive than after-school places; some schemes offered

concessions. About a third of parents were found to have difficulty paying the fees and a quarter indicated that if fees were to rise by 25% they would reduce or stop using childcare. Although well over half the schemes in one large study were found to be viable, many studies expressed doubts about sustainability.

With specific regard to study support schemes, it was found that schools provided most, either singly or in partnership with a wide variety of organisations which provided staff, funds or other resources. Typically schemes had a project manager who might be helped by a co-ordinator. In addition to staff from the schools schemes employed other teachers and non-school staff; some subcontracted out the delivery of out-of-lesson-time activities. About half the schemes employed pupil mentors. Local authorities often provided guidance and day to day help as well as funding, equipment and accommodation, and most evaluated the schemes they were involved with. As with other forms of out of school care, the research flags up the need for schemes to consider long-term viability, devising continuity strategies and ways to optimise funding. No research focusing on study support costs was identified, although it was found that two thirds of the funding which summer pilots had received had been spent on staff. However, adult helpers were unpaid in half the schools. ICT was also a heavy expenditure item.

# 4: Who Uses Out of School Care?

## 4.1 Users of care-focused provision

The evidence suggests that parents who use this type of care are those who work or study, either full or part time. Childcare users are frequently single parents (eg Hinds and Park, 2000), and mothers are most closely associated with arranging it for their children (Children in Scotland, 1998a; La Valle *et al*, 2000).

La Valle *et al*'s large study, drawing on data from 5000 parents in England and Wales and giving particular attention to the use of childcare, as well as Hinds and Park's equivalent in Scotland (2000), provide particularly strong evidence. Both report that childcare use was highest for lone parents with full time jobs and for couples who both worked full time, as well as finding evidence that this use was widespread. Lone parents in Scotland reported higher levels of childcare than their counterparts in England and Wales (Hinds and Park, 2000).

Other evidence also suggests that demand for childcare is high. Over half the parents responding to La Valle *et al*'s survey (2000) thought there were insufficient childcare and nursery education places; Frontline Management Consultants (1998), investigating the economic impact on Glasgow families of schemes funded under the Out of School Childcare Initiative, found that most schemes were operating close to capacity and, space permitting, could easily increase their rolls by a quarter. Dench and O'Regan (1997) report that out of school childcare clubs were well used in their Kent survey. Demand may be particularly great for some types of childcare; for example, Street (1999) comments that the demand for breakfast clubs exceeds the number of places, and Callender (2000), exploring the barriers to childcare, notes that care was most widely available for four-year-olds and least available for children of 13 or older. However, Callender reports a shortage of places of all kinds, in spite of apparent vacancies on providers' lists (which she suggests may be due to administrative error or mismatch between places and children's ages). Gatenby's viability study (1998) found that while nearly all childcare schemes accepted 5- to 11-year-olds, the percentage dropped to 61% for the under-fives and then again, to 27%, for children of 12 or older.

Two studies (Hinds and Park, 2000; La Valle *et al*, 2000) found that, given the option, parents tended to prefer informal childcare providers such as relatives or friends because they were trusted, would show the children affection and were felt more likely than formal providers to look after the children in a similar way to their parents. In Scotland, the proportion of respondents paying fees or wages for childcare was lower than in England and Wales (Hinds and Park, 2000). Interestingly, both Hinds and Park and La Valle *et al* also report that parents considered out of school clubs to be the best of the formal alternatives.

Whatever the form of childcare, however, parental satisfaction with it tends to be high, with study after study reporting this (Long *et al*, 1996; O'Brien and Dench, 1996; trueGrit 1998a; Children in Scotland, 1998a; Dench and O'Regan, 1997; La Valle *et al*, 2000; Hinds and Park, 2000). Satisfaction related to almost

all aspects of care – for example, Dench and O'Regan asked about transport, safety, activities, outdoor space, number and quality of staff, control of children's behaviour, the attention children received and the premises used. Satisfaction levels drop a little, however, in relation to childcare for older children (O'Brien and Dench, 1996) and the hours in which holiday clubs provide care (Dench and O'Regan, 1997). In relation to parental satisfaction, however, a note of scepticism enters one study of early years childcare (Long *et al*, 1996): the researchers point out that although respondents believed they had made the right choices and expected their children to make progress, these beliefs were relatively uninformed and rested on 'little more than conversations with, and shared information from, friends'. Parents appeared to put little importance on social interaction, prioritised educational activities over care and showed no desire to know how their children might be made happy, feeling that

> as long as the child was not unhappy then the childcare arrangement was "OK".
>
> Long *et al*, 1996

To some extent this contrasts with Howe *et al*'s (1999) study of parental views of childcare provision, in which it is shown that parents rated the care and safety of their children above any other factor in determining their choice of pre-school provision.

The research leaves little room for doubt that there is a relationship between childcare availability and parents' ability to work or engage in study (Hinds and Park, 2000; trueGrit, 1998; Children in Scotland, 1998c; Dench and O'Regan, 1997). The last of these studies claims that the labour market impact of out of school childcare club availability was strong: this impact included reduction of the percentage of respondents not working (down from 24% to 10%), reduction of the percentage of respondents in part time work (down from 37% to 32%) and an increase in the percentage of respondents in full time work (32% up to 46%). In addition, Dench and O'Regan found that nearly a third of respondents were able to work longer hours. Others worked who had not worked before, went into training, found better jobs or had been promoted. If clubs were to close, about a third said their working hours would have to drop and 11% would stop working. Hinds and Park's Scottish childcare survey (2000) stresses that on the basis of their data the link between childcare availability and parents going to work is clear. In addition to earning money and obtaining enjoyment from work,

> access to informal childcare, having children at school and good quality childcare were also key factors influencing mothers' decisions to work outside the home ...
>
> Hinds and Park (2000)

We have already commented on parents' preference for informal childcare, but there is little that policymakers can do to ensure its availability. In the area of formal childcare, however, what does access depend on? Four of the studies we identified for this review suggest that a prime consideration for parents is affordability (Long *et al*, 1996; Children in Scotland, 1998c; Hinds and Park,

2000; La Valle *et al*, 2000). For some parents this means cheap or even free care (Children in Scotland, 1998c; Hinds and Park, 2000).

The same studies also suggest that childcare needs to be convenient, not only in terms of geographical proximity to home or work but also in terms of the hours covered.

The extract quoted above calls attention to parents' desire to have good quality childcare available for their children. What, however, do users consider quality in childcare to be? One study (La Valle *et al*, 2000) suggests that to some extent this changes with the age of the child being cared for and the type of care chosen. Hence, for example, parents look to playgroups to socialise their children and take their education progress further, and they expect private childcare to be reliable. With older children, they want adequate homework support. Respondents to the 1996 study carried out by Long *et al* into early years childcare identified quality with care that encouraged physical and educational improvement. Investigating good practice in the care of very young children, Munton *et al* (2000) draw on Scottish local authority guidelines to point up the importance of four curriculum principles for early years childcare: celebrating the unique individual potential of every child, acknowledging that the whole child grows and learns, recognising that early childhood is a distinctive and valuable period of life and learning and acknowledging that parents and family are integral in a child's life.

A study conducted by Smith and Barker (2000) took the stance that the primary users of childcare were not the parents but the children. These were asked what they thought about the English out of school clubs they attended. Interestingly, the project found that 8-year-olds and older thought that both activities and staff focused more on younger children's needs, that the premises were drab, uninspiring and uncomfortable places to play, that their own ideas about new activities or equipment were not canvassed and that children did not know what to think or expect the first time they attended. The children also revealed that they would like to see staff shouting less when they reacted to children's challenging behaviour, and boys thought staff spent too much time with girls; they wanted more male playworkers.

As well as looking at who the users of childcare are and what is known about them, it may be enlightening to consider which groups are not users, or which make least use of it. La Valle *et al* (2000) discovered that unmet demand for childcare was highest among parents in the lowest income groups; yet interestingly, research undertaken by Frontline Management Consultants (1998) suggests it may be in these groups that the greatest labour market benefits are to be gained. Smith and Barker (2000) comment that there are few out of school clubs catering for children in ethnic minorities or low income families – in their study only 40% offered concessions – and that only 21% of clubs had children with disabilities in attendance. Children in Scotland (1998b) comment that in their study children with additional needs experienced difficulty in accessing rural out of school care, because lack of funds for additional staff made it difficult for clubs to offer care appropriate to their needs.

As might be expected, childcare use was found to decrease as children grow older (La Valle *et al*, 2000).

So far this discussion about the users of childcare has focused on parents, with reference to one study which saw children as the primary users of the care. We end by turning to one further study (Statham *et al*, 2000) in which the users of childcare are local authorities. Statham *et al* investigated the use of independent day care services (sponsored day care) for children in need through a survey to all English authorities plus follow-up interviews. They report three main circumstances in which authorities might use sponsored day care: as an alternative to local authority provision, especially if the families involved felt that some stigma attached to local authority arrangements; as an extension to local authority provision (when, for example, children were not eligible for local authority care because they were too young); and, if the authority did not have the provision needed, as a substitute for it. Statham *et al* found that sponsored day care was mainly used for children aged three and under, and to provide short term crisis support rather than ongoing care. Officers in most authorities reported a trend towards sponsored places being used for children and families with a higher level of need. The researchers comment that demands on independent day care providers were increasing.

## 4.2 Study support users

With respect to study support specifically, the research suggests that take up of opportunities varies, perhaps according to the type of scheme. Study support under the relatively recent 'Playing for Success' initiative, whereby youngsters have access to centres associated with football clubs and their players, seems to be particularly popular: Sharp *et al* (1999) found that most of the pupils involved liked the initiative and that most attended over 80% of the course. On the other hand, Keys *et al* (1999), working with information from over 1000 schools and 9000 pupils, found that in the survey week participation rates varied, with 40% to 56% of pupils involved in at least one activity. The yearly variation ranged from 74% to 84%. About a fifth of the pupils had attended three or more activities during the survey week. Mason *et al* (2000), reporting on take-up rates of 25 summer pilot schools, also found variation, with some schools over- and others under-subscribed. Reporting on takeup of 32 summer school pilots, Hutchinson *et al* (Hutchinson *et al*, 2001) found it lighter than expected in the early months of the summer. Eventually the programme attracted 1460 pupils overall with a 'reasonable' balance of participants – but the researchers comment that they would have liked to see a higher proportion of 'at risk' young people from ethnic minority backgrounds at the schools. In 1996, Gallacher (1996) had identified lack of pupil commitment and irregular attendance as weaknesses of his Glasgow school's pilot supported study project for high achieving first year pupils.

Gallacher's study was plainly targeted. So were projects established under the Playing for Success initiative: Sharp *et al* (1999) found that the scheme reached its target of under-achieving pupils and that a third of participants had special

educational needs, more than a third were eligible for free school meals, over a quarter were from non-white backgrounds and there were equal numbers of boys and girls. The research findings suggest that targeting is more usual than not. Although Keys *et al* (1999) found that headteachers claimed most study support activities were not targeted at specific groups, the research team discovered that in some secondary and primary schools maths/number clubs were targeted at high achievers, while in some secondary schools study skills/ homework clubs were targeted at low achievers.

On the other hand, Sharp *et al* (1999), reviewing research, suggest that targeting is usual; they consistently found that participants were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with many programmes being based in areas of social deprivation and addressing specific target groups. Research undertaken by Keys and Wilkinson (1999) tends to support the view that most schemes targeted: they found that schemes in over half of 103 local education authorities were targeted in some way, mainly at low achievers, gifted pupils and pupils from ethnic minorities. Mason *et al* (2000) found that while some schemes targeted primary/secondary transfer pupils, under-achievers including special needs pupils, and pupils considered to be socially disadvantaged, others did not. The researchers suggest that summer schools should be for all pupils. In a relatively early study of six study support initiatives, two in Belfast, two in London and two in Strathclyde, MacBeath (1993) found that these initiatives were intended to support young people approaching national examinations, and that schools sought to target those groups which would provide the 'biggest pay-off'. He points out that higher GCSE/Standard Grade results are an immediate return, but that longer-term investment in work with young offenders might save society a substantial financial burden.

## 4.3 Summary

Parents who use care-focused provision tend to be those who work or study either full or part time. They are frequently single, with mothers being most closely associated with whatever arrangements are made. Demand was found to be high; schemes are well used and operate close to capacity. Demand for breakfast clubs, in particular, exceeded the number of places, and places were found to be least readily available for children of 13 years or older. While most parents preferred informal childcare, they considered out of school care clubs to be the best of the formal alternatives. Most studies report very high parent satisfaction with the childcare arrangements they have, though the satisfaction levels drop a little in relation to care for older children and the hours that holiday clubs provide. Out of school childcare clubs seem to have had a strong impact on the labour market, with the percentages of parents not working going down and those in full time work increasing, parents working longer hours, being promoted or being fresh entrants to the labour force. Whether parents have access to childcare is dependent on its affordability, its proximity to home or work and the hours it covers.

Most parents hoped for quality in childcare. Views of what this is changed with the age of the children being cared for and the type of care chosen: eg parents expect playgroups to socialise their children and further their educational prowess, and want older children to be supported in doing their homework. If the children and not their parents are considered as the users of the care, a different view of quality can be inferred. One project found that children of eight years and above thought staff and activities focused more on the needs of younger children, that the premises were drab, uncomfortable and uninspiring and that their own views were not taken account of. They would like staff to shout less when children exhibited 'challenging behaviour'.

Unmet demand for childcare was highest in the lowest income groups. Few out of school care clubs catered for children in low income families, ethnic minorities or children with disabilities, in the latter case perhaps because clubs could not afford appropriate staff. Childcare use decreased as children grew older. Local authorities who buy independent day care ('sponsored day care') can also be considered as users of childcare. Such care might be bought as an alternative, an extension or a substitute to local authority provision, was mainly used in connection with children of three years and under, and tended to provide short term crisis support for families.

In relation to study support, takeup was found to vary, but the Playing for Success initiative was especially popular. In one large study about half the pupils were involved in at least one activity in the survey week. Headteachers in one study claimed they did not target their schemes, but other research suggests that targeting is the norm, with pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, low and high achievers, pupils from ethnic minorities, primary/secondary transfer pupils variously at the centre of the schemes.

# 5: What are the Benefits of Out of School Care?

## 5.1 Care-focused provision

The discussion on childcare users offered in the previous section has already focused some attention on a major impact of childcare. As was made clear, users tended to be mothers, and were often single; the impact on them of childcare availability, which many would also class as a benefit, was that they were enabled to enter or extend work or training (Dench and O'Regan, 1997; trueGrit, 1998; Children in Scotland, 1998c; Hinds and Park, 2000). The study undertaken by trueGrit adds detail in reporting that 68% of the 249 participants in its interviews felt that their employment and/or training opportunities had improved as a result of their accessing childcare centres set up under the Initiative, a proportion which rose to 75% in the regeneration area group. 24% thought their abilities to do their jobs had increased, and 20% that they had fewer unplanned absences.

Given that the prime aim of the Out of School Childcare Initiative was 'to improve the quantity and quality of out-of-school childcare in order to facilitate increased labour market participation, among those who wish to combine work with family life, by parents of school-aged children' (O'Brien and Dench, 1996) impacts of this kind could be expected. Labour market benefits aside, however, we found few studies which presented evidence for benefits arising from childcare, although some appeared to make assumptions that such benefits exist. Children in Scotland (1998a), for example, states that the Government needs to look at providing a more comprehensive childcare strategy encompassing the needs of parents who study as well as work 'given the long-term benefits to be gained'. Street (1999) refers to work being undertaken by the New Policy Institute to explore the different dimensions of breakfast clubs and rehearses some of the arguments in their favour – that breakfast can help children's intellectual functions and schools offering it can improve school attendance. A recent newspaper article (Scotsman, 2001) reports that a study by the Greater Glasgow Health Board found that primary school pupils attending breakfast clubs had a better diet, had fewer sick days and had fewer discipline problems than other pupils. Overall, however, studies attempting to demonstrate evidence for the benefits of breakfast clubs have been inconclusive (Powney *et al*, 2000).

The only UK study we uncovered which offered clear evidence for the benefits of care with a childcare focus other than those directly related to the labour market was undertaken by Dench and O'Regan (1997), who, in surveying 282 parents, found that almost all said their children were happy attending an after-school club and three quarters reported social benefits, especially social interaction and development. These were especially valued by parents of 'only' children and those living in isolated areas. Benefits for family life were peace of mind, reduction of stress and a general increase in parents' ability to cope with life. A well-funded longitudinal study of the effects of pre-school education of all types on children aged three to seven years has been commissioned by the

DfEE, however, and is now under way at Oxford University, conducted by Kathy Silver. Findings should be available soon.

## 5.2 Benefits of study support

Eight of the UK studies of study support, dating from 1993 to 2001, gave an indication of the benefits of the schemes. Before moving to what these were, however, we feel it important to make clear that the nature of evidence tends to be perception rather than 'hard' evidence of improvements in performance, and to focus on personal development. In the earliest report of the eight (MacBeath, 1993) the author states that although subjective evidence was available there was 'little hard evidence to show that study support is a better investment for a greater number of people than some other worthy candidate for expenditure'. A large study of out of lesson time activities undertaken by Keys *et al* (1999) for the Department for Education and Employment found that monitoring and evaluation were 'uncommon', and writing in 2000, Mason *et al* note that their evaluation of 25 summer school pilot schemes shows that personal and social development (PSD) skills were subject to evaluation, rather than academic performance (a likely reflection of the nature of the summer school aims which put strong emphasis on development of self-confidence and self-esteem; independent learning and motivation).

Six of the eight studies offering comment related to benefits were conducted for the Department for Education and Employment. Four (Mason *et al*, 1999; Sharp *et al*, 1999a; Mason *et al*, 2000; Hutchinson *et al*, 2001) were evaluations of study support pilots of various kinds; one (Keys *et al*, 1999) gathered baseline data through a large-scale survey of out of lesson time activities in over 1000 schools, and the other (Sharp *et al*, 1999b) was a critical review of UK and international literature relating to study support, some of it opinion and some of it, research. The remaining two of the eight were a report of a study of 6 early UK-wide study support initiatives (MacBeath, 1993) and a report of one Scottish school's attempt to improve pupil motivation and attitudes to other pupils through supported study for higher achievers (Gallacher, 1996). Findings from all were similar although the limited nature of data together with local factors in the last of these studies prohibit clear conclusions.

Benefits in the area of personal and social development were improved pupil attitudes in school (MacBeath, 1993; Sharp *et al*, 1999a, 1999b; Mason *et al*, 1999, 2000), especially in respect of motivation to read and do mathematics (Sharp *et al*, 1999a), improved self-esteem (Sharp *et al* 1999a, b; Hutchinson *et al*, 2001) and improved social skills (Gallacher, 1996; Mason *et al*, 1999; Hutchinson *et al*, 2001). Hutchinson *et al* also reported data related to improvement in pupil attitudes to school generally, in that at the end of the summer school programmes there was a 5% rise overall in the proportion of young people who wanted to move into post-compulsory education. Teachers tended to report enhanced relationships with pupils as an immediate and important benefit of their involvement in delivering study support (MacBeath, 1993; Sharp *et al*, 1999b): not only did they learn more about the difficulties

their pupils faced, which caused them to re-examine their classroom practice, but they were able to pass their new understanding on to colleagues. In addition, teachers felt they benefited from being able to pursue their own interests (MacBeath, 1993).

With respect to standards of work, the overall picture tends to be one of improvement through study support. Sharp *et al* (1999a) remark that both teachers and parents noted improvements in pupils' ICT and study skills, while parents felt that study centres also helped their children with mathematics, reading, writing and homework. Mason *et al* (1999) report that some schemes had data showing improved GCSE grades for regular homework club attenders compared with matched non-attenders, and in 1993 MacBeath had been able to draw on data from two of the six UK study support projects he studied to show 'consistently rising achievement' in GCSE grades in these schools between 1990 and 1992. This was particularly noticeable in one school where there was 'dramatic evidence' of a rise in overall achievement in Standard Grade for some subjects (40% and 32% respectively in science and social subjects). MacBeath notes that the study schemes in both schools strongly emphasised examination results.

The effectiveness of study support schemes may be linked to the time of year when they are offered. The review of study support undertaken by Sharp *et al* (1999b), while finding some evidence that secondary students attending Easter revision classes achieved better GCSE grades than non-attenders, reports equivocal evidence for academic gains resulting from summer schools. While one school which used assessment evidence from some of the centres indicated progress in reading and spelling, another compared progress between assessments in May and December and found evidence of 'a general decline in scores from pre- to post-test' and children who had attended the summer schools did not make better progress than others. A suggested explanation was that while the summer schools boosted performance, this was temporary, with any gains being lost over the rest of the summer period.

Mason *et al* (1999, 2000) comment that out of school learning projects that supported children's transfer from primary to secondary school seemed to be particularly successful, and that partnerships, whether with schools or other organisations, appeared to benefit those schools that entered into them in that they gained access to expertise from professionals other than teachers as well as to facilities normally outwith their capacity.

Five of the studies (MacBeath, 1993; Sharp *et al*, 1999a; Mason, 1999, 2000; Hutchinson *et al*, 2001) comment on the conditions that are likely to make study schemes successful and thus enhance benefits. Hutchinson *et al* stress the need for participants and their parents to have clear expectations about the programmes. Mason (1999) draws on the substantial body of work carried out at the National Foundation for Educational Research to identify features of successful projects as careful planning, enthusiastic staff with appropriate skills, partnership with other schools or organisations and giving study support a high profile within the school. MacBeath (1993) and Sharp *et al* (1999a) offer

evidence to suggest it is valuable to students that help is immediate and given on an individual level – as is possible when teachers are not distracted or when mentors are present to support teaching staff. Sharp *et al* also draw attention to the motivating effects of rewards and incentives and working in a fresh, out of school, environment – in the case of the project in question, a football setting. However, MacBeath warns that different students require different settings for their best work; those who thrive in a school environment will continue to do well in that environment. The important things are that the setting is physically pleasant and that the time spent is quality time, without distraction.

To put much of the foregoing into perspective, it is important to mention a caveat sounded by three of the research reports (MacBeath, 1993; Sharp *et al*, 1999b; Keys *et al*, 1999). This is that because factors other than the study support schemes affect pupils' achievement it is not possible to know how great a part the schemes play in promoting them. Sharp *et al* (1999b) point out that most of the evidence for benefits is suggestive rather than conclusive, and that while there are associations between participation in such support and positive outcomes, it is not clear to what this may be ascribed:

> It is possible that young people who are selected or who choose to take part in study support activities differ from the general school population (eg in terms of academic achievement, motivation and family background). It is also possible that successful/ innovative schools are more likely to offer study support activities. Few studies have been able to establish that their results are due to the influence of study support alone, or that the positive outcomes are caused by participation and not vice versa.
>
> Sharp *et al* (1999b)

Findings from Keys *et al*'s large study (1999) support this hypothesis: those pupils who saw themselves as the best in their class and those who intended to continue in full time education were more likely than others to attend a greater number of out of lesson time learning activities, and those with larger numbers of books in their homes were more likely than those with fewer to attend such activities at all. Interestingly, at an early stage MacBeath (1993) warned of the potentially divisive effect of offering study support that was likely to attract students who were already highly motivated and doing well at school. A survey conducted near the beginning of his study suggested that the study support group was positive about school from the outset and that one of the effects of the support was to reinforce these positive attitudes. As a result, 'the gap between attenders and non-attenders widen[ed] slightly'.

## 5.3 Summary

The main benefit of care-focused provision lies in its impact on the labour market, the proportions of parents being enabled to enter or extend work or training being higher as a result of the accessibility of such provision. Participants in one study felt their employment and training opportunities had improved, others that their ability to do their job increased and others that they had fewer unplanned absences. There is little evidence of other kinds of benefits

although a Glasgow study reported that pupils attending breakfast clubs had a better diet, fewer sick days and fewer discipline problems than other pupils. In one study, most parents whose children attended an after-school club reported that their children were happy there and had improved their social interaction and development, which were especially important benefits to parents of 'only' children and those living in isolated areas. Benefits for family life included peace of mind, reduced stress and an increased ability on the part of the parents to cope with life.

Several of the researchers whose work we examined noted either that monitoring and evaluation were uncommon or that personal and social development was evaluated rather than academic performance. With regard to personal and social development, benefits included improved pupil attitudes in schools, especially in respect of increased motivation for reading and mathematics, improved self-esteem and social skills. There is some evidence that summer school programmes may have encouraged the young people taking part in them to move into post-compulsory education, and teachers felt that involvement in study support improved their relationships with pupils and enabled them to pursue their own interests. In one study teachers and parents both noticed improvements in pupils' ICT and study skills, and parents felt that study centres helped their children with mathematics, reading, writing and homework; some schemes had data showing improved GCSE grades for regular homework club attenders. Whether or not summer schools improved achievement is unclear, with different schools in one study reporting progress and decline respectively; the researchers suggest that in this case the summer school boosted performance, but only temporarily. However, out of school learning projects that supported children's transfer from primary to secondary schools seemed to be successful and schools that entered into partnerships tended to benefit from them, accessing different professional expertise and facilities.

Conditions likely to make study schemes successful and thus enhance benefits included ensuring that participants and their parents had clear expectations, planning with care, drawing on enthusiastic staff with appropriate skills, entering into partnership and giving study support a high profile within the school. Students find it valuable to have individual and immediate help. Rewards and incentives can have a motivating effect and one study suggests that it helps to study in a fresh, out of school setting, although another warns that different students prosper in different circumstances – some students do well in a school setting.

Importantly, three of the research teams warn that because factors other than the study support schemes affect pupils' achievements, it is not possible to know how great a part the schemes play in promoting them.

# 6: The International Literature

## 6.1 Europe and Scandinavia

### *6.1.1 Defining out of school care*

In the early 1990s Children in Scotland (Children in Scotland, 1998d), through literature and questionnaires to key organisations, examined the range of services which families used for their primary school children out of school hours in six Member States: Belgium, Denmark, France, The Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Although their report moves towards a definition of out of school hours activities in stating that

> A range of different services provide opportunities for educational, social, recreational and cultural activities. These may take the form of social clubs, music classes, or supervised homework sessions as well as formal care arrangements. Services or activities may be offered by schools or other institutions or may be arranged directly by families themselves on an individual basis
>
> Children in Scotland, 1998d

the report makes no clear distinction between childcare that offers care alone and childcare that offers study support. Indeed, a separate report strongly suggests that in Denmark and Sweden such a distinction was quite deliberately becoming blurred:

> In both Denmark and Sweden the aim is now to develop childcare services that integrate the needs of education, the unemployed and family support services.
>
> Children in Scotland, 1998e

### *6.1.2 Provision of out of school care*

Children in Scotland (1998d) found that except in Denmark, where in 1992 there were places for 40% of that age group, provision of publicly-funded school care across the EU for 7- to 10-year-olds was very low, with fewer than 10% receiving it. School age childcare services were in particularly short supply in most rural areas. During term times Italy, Belgium and France provided mainly school-based childcare, while in Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom provision was mainly centre-based; Greece, Ireland and Spain had 'virtually no publicly funded provision' in term times. Reliable statistics on family day care services were not available but the report notes that survey evidence suggests most parents have to rely on informal services for their child care arrangements.

This picture of a heavy reliance on informal services finds exceptions in Denmark and Sweden, where the law requires local authorities to provide publicly-funded childcare places for children of one to twelve years in age (Children in Scotland, 1998e). Responsibility for services has been devolved to the services themselves with, in Denmark, a legislative requirement for strong user participation: there must be a parent majority on management committees

of daycare institutions, and children/ young people must be represented on school councils and youth services.

Legislation such as this has led to considerable changes for schools. In both countries, early years services developed as part of the social welfare system but new links are being forged with education: since late 1998 pre-school services have had their own curriculum based on the principle that welfare and education are linked. Increasingly, Swedish schools are offering an integrated all-day service from 6.30am to around 6pm. As the role of schools broadens, staff roles are also changing: the report cites an example of a Swedish school headteacher who manages two other schools, six nursery centres, childminders and an after-school centre. Children are taught in mixed age groups in 'an environment designed to reflect the style of a daycare centre'.

A factsheet about childcare in Sweden (Swedish Institute, 1999) confirms that in Sweden childcare as care and childcare as school support are drawing closer together, stating that

> Policy-makers have declared their intention to bring schools and leisure-time centres closer together and today most leisure-time centres collaborate with schools in the area to a greater or lesser degree
>
> Swedish Institute, 1999

### *6.1.3 Use of childcare in Sweden*

Leisure centres, which are 'intended as a supplement to schooling and are supposed to help children in their development and provide them with meaningful recreation' are the most used of three types of publicly-funded school care options (the others are family daycare homes and open leisure centres, but these are far less widespread). Virtually all staff have some form of training for working with children. The centres are open all year with hours to suit parents, are registered and most children attending them are six to nine years old. Parents pay a fee. In 1998, 56% of all children in this age group and 7% of those aged 10 to 12 were attending a leisure-time centre, and attendance was increasing rapidly so that the overwhelming majority of children in Sweden were receiving childcare in one form or another.

### *6.1.4 Childcare costs in Sweden*

The factsheet makes it clear that such a situation is not reached without considerable cost. In 1998 gross costs for childcare in Sweden amounted to SEK 39,000 million (over £2,500 million) compared to SEK 53,000 million (over £3,500 million) for compulsory schooling, and corresponded to 14% of local authorities' total costs.

### *6.1.5 Benefits from childcare in Sweden*

Although this expenditure appears to be have been incurred on the basis of estimates presented in the 1970s and 1980s showing that the expansion of childcare facilities was economically beneficial to society, there seems to have

been no systematic evaluation of its real costs and benefits: the factsheet states that

> while fairly detailed information was available concerning the local authorities' gross costs for childcare, there was very little current information on the value to society of such care and thus on what the net costs might be.
>
> Swedish Institute, 1999

There were substantial cuts in the 1990s, which led to increases in the numbers of children in groups and a reduction in staff numbers, and the quality of public childcare became a focus for debate.

Across Europe, then, the functions of childcare varied, as did the activities offered and the types of providers. The level of publicly funded childcare tended to be low except in Denmark and Sweden where the provision of care was statutory for all children between the ages of one and twelve, and widely used. We found no research focusing on the benefits of any form of childcare in Europe or Scandinavia.

## 6.2 The United States

Given the overwhelmingly large body of research available from the US, and the fact that this literature is not a prime focus for this study, we have limited its coverage in this review to a summary of relevant findings from one article, itself a review (Fashola, 1998) which gives a flavour of childcare provision and research in the United States. Fashola begins by defining various childcare terms in use in the US and then moves to review 34 programs.

### *6.2.1 Program definitions*

Fashola defines three types of programs: daycare, after school and school-based academic extended-day. 'Daycare programs' emphasise recreational and cultural activities, though some provide homework assistance. Their main goal is to provide children whose parents are working with a 'safe haven'. Typical hours of operation are 3 to 6 pm, and children are usually pre-school to third grade. Both staff and premises (which might be schools but need not be) must be licensed.

'After-school programs' tend to involve children aged 5 to 18 and emphasise academic as well as non-academic activities. Compared to daycare programs they are more likely to provide transport, a greater variety of recreational activities and increased child:adult ratios. They are usually more affordable than childcare. Some offer specialised activities eg ballet, music and use professionals; because of this students might enrol out of pure interest. Premises can be anywhere, eg schools, community halls, churches.

'School-based academic extended-day programs' are directly connected to what happens during the school day and are typically located in the school building. They provide a mixture of academic, recreational and cultural programs. Regular teachers and paraprofessionals are usually paid to stay at the school during the

after-school hours. The main focus is academic with teachers taking small groups, tutorial remedial classes, supervising homework clubs and teaching advanced or supplementary courses. They may also supervise and train volunteers or paraprofessionals. Community members may be involved in planning or included as teachers for some of the activities.

### *6.2.2 Use of Fashola's review*

Fashola describes and summarises the evaluation evidence associated with 34 programs which were being or *could be used as* after-school programs. For the purposes of the current review we have excluded the latter type. We have also excluded programs for which there was no research evidence of effectiveness, and most for which evidence was only partial. This leaves only 5 programs with relevance to the current review: an Extended Day Tutoring language arts program in Memphis, the academically oriented Fifth Dimension program, the Howard Street Tutoring Program which uses volunteers, HOSTS (Helping One Student to Succeed), another volunteer tutoring program, and LA's BEST, a community-based program oriented to care, unlike the previous four which are academically-focused. Although the evaluation of LA's BEST program had yielded only partial results when Fashola reviewed it, it has been included here so that at least one of the community-based programs is represented.

### *6.2.3 Program descriptions and research findings*

*An extended day tutoring language arts program*

The Extended Day Tutoring Language Arts Program in Memphis aimed to improve the reading performances of students in grades two to four through group tutoring after school. Teachers were trained in how to tutor; students, chosen based on their need for additional help, attended for between one and four hours each week. After the language arts lessons they could do cultural, recreational or other academic things. The study (Ross *et al*, 1996) worked with 656 students, half engaged on the program and half not, randomly selected into each group and matched with regard to test scores, attitude, behaviour, grade and age. The study found that overall, the greater the attendance rates the more likely the students were to perform 'slightly better' than their counterparts, but the evaluation was weakened by limitations on its ability to control for attendance and select a control group.

*A cognitively based extended school-day program*

'Fifth Dimension' is a 'cognitively based extended school-day program' for kindergarteners developed at the University of California at San Diego. Learning through play is emphasised, but the program is intended to enhance work-study habits, social skills, social consciousness, working with peers, following instructions and problem-solving, and to improve academic achievement in maths, reading and word problems. With the input of students each site creates a mythical 'creature' which lives in the computer. It receives messages from

pupils about their progress, success and frustrations; pupils also ask its advice. Pupils have help from their peers, college students and other volunteer mentors. Each program has a site co-ordinator who acts as a bridge between the training body (university) and location of the program (eg boys and girls clubs, a church). They are responsible for day to day running of the program and troubleshooting. Program staff are usually undergraduates from the local university who have been trained for the role. A study of the extent to which children had acquired skills and knowledge specific to the program (Blanton *et al*, 1995) found that students showed improvement over time in playing computer and board games, knowledge of computers, proficiency at using them and computer terminology.

*A tutoring program for remedial reading*

The Howard Street Tutoring Program is a remedial reading program for grade two and three pupils. When schools become involved in the program a reading specialist or teacher becomes the on-site co-ordinator. He or she is trained in tutoring, lesson preparation and how to train other tutoring staff, who are all volunteers. Classroom teachers place pupils as deemed appropriate and once enrolled pupils have daily one-to-one hourly sessions every week. In two evaluations conducted by the program's creator (Morris, 1990; Morris *et al*, 1990) the Howard Street Tutoring program students outperformed randomly assigned comparison groups in word recognition and word-passage reading.

*A tutor/mentoring program for students 'at risk'*

The Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) program helps schools create tutoring programs for 'at-risk' students using a mentoring approach. HOSTS schools provide one-to-one after school tutorial services to low-performing students in elementary to high school. HOSTS trains volunteers from businesses, the community, peers and cross-age mentors to act as tutors; it helps schools choose appropriate curriculum materials and the mentor/tutor follows a lesson plan carefully designed to align with local objectives. Two evaluations (HOSTS Corporation 1994; Gallegos, 1995) showed that students, especially those in grades 1, 2 and 3, made substantial gains from one spring to the next.

*A community-based after-school program*

'LA's BEST' is an after-school program created in 1988 for students living in Los Angeles, with the goals of creating a safe environment, providing enhanced educational, enrichment and recreational activities and teaching socio-emotional skills. It targets low achieving pupils and pupils from low income households, and sites must be located in high crime areas. Management of each local school program is the responsibility of a site co-ordinator who oversees additional staff: program supervisors, playground workers, small group leaders, high school student workers and volunteers. All employees must be qualified and co-ordinators and supervisors tend to be teachers from the regular school day.

Program participants follow the basic academic program and must take part in the homework lab which provides tuition in language, mathematics and other subjects, and whose tutors receive training. Other compulsory academic activities include daily computer skills and literacy sessions, and in addition, after the academic period students can choose from a variety of recreational, cultural and enrichment activities. The program is free on a first-come, first-served basis and tries to involve parents in family-oriented city-wide events like workshops. A formative evaluation in the early 1990s (Brooks and Herman, 1991) found that parents and students felt they had benefited from the program but recommended the future inclusion of more rigorous qualitative and quantitative evaluations. A later longitudinal study (Brooks *et al*, 1995), using a matched-comparison design, found that by the end of the study grades and effort scores of students in both control and experimental groups had increased. The scores of the LA's BEST students increased more than those of the students in the control group and even outscored them in all areas in the end, although only the reading scores differences were significant. Interviews with students revealed that attending LA's BEST they felt safer during the after-school hours, had more access to helpful resources, liked school more, had higher aspirations to enter high school and were less likely to join gangs. Parents felt their children were in a safe environment and were being encouraged to apply themselves academically.

### *6.2.4 Providers and costs*

Fashola does not make clear who provides these programs, although clearly some were located within schools and run by schools who had subscribed to them and whose staff received training provided by the programs. Nor does Fashola give program costs, although he notes that they varied greatly.

### *6.2.5 Program benefits*

Evaluations of all the 34 programs Fashola reviewed, including the five noted above, appeared to show academic benefits. With respect to these Fashola warns, several times, that caution is required, making the following points:

- The most effective ways to capitalise on the use of after-school time are not well understood
- Existing after-school efforts vary enormously in purpose and in operation
- Although it is essential to know what types of extended day programs and particularly what specific programs are most likely to lead to values outcomes, this kind of research is very limited
- Selection bias is a frequent problem because students who voluntarily attend various after-school programs may be different from those who do not choose to do so and the research has usually involved middle-income Caucasian students
- Circumstances surrounding the type of care provided, the kinds of students who attended the different programs, and what the programs themselves

entailed, have rarely been studied in detail. Different studies have yielded different answers to different questions about different issues relating to after-school care.

## 6.3 Summary

In Europe, a range of different services provided opportunities for out of school hours activities, but across the European Union the provision of publicly-funded school-age childcare places for 7- to 10-year-olds was low, especially in rural areas. Denmark and Sweden, where publicly-funded childcare places for children of 1 to 12 years old is a statutory requirement of local authorities, were notable exceptions. This requirement in Scandinavia led to the drawing together of childcare as care and childcare as school support, and to considerable changes in the roles of schools, which were broadening as they offered an increasingly integrated service. In Sweden, about which we found the most information, most care for 6- to 9-year-olds was provided by leisure centres. These were open all year, with hours to suit parents. Demand was increasing and most Swedish children were receiving some form of childcare. Costs amounted to 14% of local authorities' total costs. There has been little systematic evaluation of the costs and benefits of such provision, and cuts have led to a public debate of the quality of public childcare.

In the United States three types of 'programs' relate to out of school care: daycare programs for pre-school to third graders, which emphasise recreational and cultural activities, although some provide homework assistance; after-school programs for young people aged 5 to 18, which emphasise academic and non-academic activities; and school-based academic extended day programs, which are directly connected to what happens during the school day. Information is available from a study which reviewed 34 after-school programs, five of which have been included in the current review. All of these five targeted pupils, whether kindergartners, those in need of reading improvement, those considered to be at risk or low-achieving pupils in low income households and high crime areas. No information about program providers or costs is given. Evaluations of all five programs showed improved performance in their areas of focus and participants in one community-based study claimed they felt safer, had more access to helpful resources, liked school more, had higher aspirations to continue education and were less likely to join gangs. Parents felt their children were safe and were being encouraged to apply themselves academically. However, the reviewer warns that the benefits should be taken with caution, largely because existing after-school schemes varied enormously, because research was limited and because selection bias was a problem.

# 7: Implications for Scottish Education

## 7.1 Introduction

It is surprisingly difficult to draw together the main findings from the body of research reviewed for this study, largely because the concept of out of school childcare covers many different forms of care so that evaluations are essentially investigating different things, and it cannot be known whether findings in one situation apply to others. There are few across-the-board statements that can be made as a result. To date, care-focused provision has generated more research at both national and more local level than study support, much of it focusing on issues of supply and demand – the type and number of childcare places available, the hours covered, its financial viability and sustainability, for example, rather than what children do when they are being cared for or the nature of the environment in which they are placed. Overall, there is a clear place for more research, rigorously conducted, focusing on the question of what quality in out of school care is. The focus of much of the research into study support has been on benefits and features associated with success, which is not necessarily the same as quality, and few studies investigated the costs of study support. The following paragraphs raise several issues.

## 7.2 What is quality in childcare?

The question of what purpose out of school care or indeed other forms of childcare should serve is open to debate, with some research pointing to the need to ask further fundamental questions about the number of structured activities in children's lives, with consequent loss of opportunity for free, unstructured play and simply being at home. Although the debate has centred on very young children, it may also be a question worth asking in relation to children of school age being cared for outside standard school hours.

Few would disagree with the notion that study support requires some structure to fulfil its educational aims. Participation is voluntary, so young people engaging in it can opt out if they feel over-constrained. The case for how structured other forms of out of school childcare should be, however, is less clear and debate is closely related to the issue of what, in the eyes of the users, constitutes quality care. As has been stated above, there is little in the literature on out of school childcare which focuses on this, although some features of quality can be inferred.

Parents believe that the ideal provider is informal – that if they themselves cannot fulfil the role, close family relatives are next best. Reasons have to do not with education but with trust and the belief that relatives will treat children with affection, as would their parents. Perhaps it is impossible for formally provided care to emulate this, but a high ratio of well-trained staff working with and listening to children would help ensure close relationships between carers and children and make it more likely that children's needs are met.

In the eyes of parents, the most favoured of the formal childcare options seems to be the out of school club. Perhaps the structured activity it offers is what parents find appealing here. However, research offers little evidence to support this conjecture and indeed there is relatively little research about out of school clubs generally. Given their popularity, such research could be of interest, and make a useful contribution to the debate about the quality of childcare. Certainly such research as there is suggests that children appreciate out of school clubs more for the play opportunities they offer than for any educational content they might contain.

Some research suggests that so long as they are assured that their children are 'OK' in whatever care is provided, parents are surprisingly uncritical, but other studies suggest they hope for more than basic care levels and would like to feel their children are furthering their educational prowess as well. If child care is required to fulfil an educational function, however, no matter at what level, the implications are immense and would have important consequences for funding.

## 7.3 Costs

In general, child care schemes operate with very low running costs, sometimes with the free use of premises and with unpaid help, yet there is research suggesting that around 30% of schemes have difficulty remaining viable. Increasing fees to parents is unlikely to be the answer: childcare has to be affordable or parents will stop using it, a situation most likely to obtain in low-income areas where research suggests the greatest economic benefits of childcare availability are to be expected. Projects are being urged to look to the future, exploring sponsorship opportunities and thinking strategically, yet many will be short staffed and have little time for such planning. In the area of study support, research has shown partnership to be beneficial. Currently, the most frequent providers of out of school childcare have been found to be voluntary organisations; it is possible that these would be helped by increased participation of partners in this provision. Employers are obvious possibilities for partnership, not least because they stand to gain from the wider accessibility of childcare. The extent to which they currently provide it is uncertain as they are not often mentioned in the research, but we know that some large employers, at least, are interested in childcare provision. The Scottish Executive Education Department, for example, runs a crèche and a holiday play scheme for school-aged children; BP has supported study support schemes. Further research into the current and potential roles played by employers in childcare provision, together with exploration of ways in which they might be encouraged to partner other providers, might prove helpful.

In relation to the issue of fees charged to parents, the research reveals extremely wide variation from area to area – one study quotes a range of 50p to £10 for an hour of after-school care, suggesting that some parents are far more likely than others to be able to take advantage of the childcare offered. While it is likely that schemes offering care at the low cost end of the range rely heavily on the goodwill of low-paid or unpaid staff, it may also be that some have developed

ways of operating from which others could learn, and further research into this might prove valuable.

Some schemes are likely to be operating on unrealistically low budgets, however. It is possible both that subsidies will always be needed and that supply will never be able to match the demand for low-cost, quality care. There may be much to learn from the Swedish experience, where provision of childcare places for all children 1 to 12 years old has been statutory for local authorities for some years. Costs associated with this were high and cuts were deemed necessary in the 1990s, leading to public debate about the quality of public childcare. The actual costs of provision, however, need to be offset by the possibility of a stream of potential benefits, coming at later stages in a child's life: some research has shown that these can affect not only the recipients of provision but society too through, for example, higher attainment levels and lower rates of juvenile crime (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1997). How far Schweinhart and Weikart's research focusing on black youth in the United States would have relevance in a Scottish context is uncertain, however.

## 7.4 Gaps in out of school childcare provision

The research suggests that there may be a need to re-examine the provision of care for children aged 10 or more. Young children were found to enjoy out of school clubs, but many of those aged nine and above thought the activities they offered were geared to the younger ones. In addition, other research points to a particular shortage of childcare places for children of 12 or older. Study support sessions, which older children might join, are often targeted at specific needs groups – and in any case the children might want to use their time for activities other than learning. There may be a case for examining the care options for young people between, say, 10 and 15 years old more closely.

It is also possible that parents and children from ethnic minorities and children with some disability are unable to make use of out of school clubs, as few clubs were found to have made provision for them, particularly in rural areas. Many parents agree that out of school care clubs are particularly desirable forms of childcare, which makes this possibility worth further investigation. Is this a widespread finding? Is it known how great demands in these areas are, and how different provision needs to be? If not, further research could help clarify the situation and help policymakers decide where and how to target funds.

Childcare provision does not necessarily cover the hours needed. Although the most widely used childcare sessions were found to be during normal school hours (possibly because use followed provision) there was also shown to be a need for childcare at less standard times. Many schemes run after school hours, yet parents need to access care before school starts – a possible reason why breakfast clubs are so popular – and during the holidays as well.

## 7.5 A wider role for schools

How might these gaps be filled? Schemes are already having difficulty meeting their running costs, and staff prepared to work unsociable hours such as the early mornings are likely to be hard to find. One solution is to broaden provision as in the Swedish model and extend the role of the school. Some schools are already running breakfast clubs as well as after-school care of various kinds; how far could others extend the hours in which they provide care? Given current moves at local authority level to bring care and education systems together, it would be a logical step to look afresh at schools as resources in the community, and at ways of maximising their use.

## 7.6 Benefits of out of school childcare

There is strong evidence that childcare frees parents not only to enter work or study but also to invest more time and therefore effort in whatever work or study they do, opening routes to promotion and opportunity. Claims have also been made for other benefits, especially in the area of better personal and social development for children and, in the arena of family life, in the form of peace of mind and reduced stress. The literature shows a consistently positive picture of study support, claiming that it can improve pupils' attitudes, not only within school but also with respect to the system of school itself, so that more are encouraged to remain in education after the compulsory years. Other evidence suggests it is possible for pupils to improve their performance in examinations through engaging in study support. If all these benefits are to be had, then out of school care would seem to be a good long-term investment for the community, helping make individuals and families more secure and independent.

We would like to make two points in relation to this. One point is that if they are real, such benefits are impressive. However, most of the schemes reviewed were targeted in some way, thus bypassing the children in the middle, the children of average ability. Have they nothing to gain by improvement? If study support can build confidence and self-esteem, or raise performance, should it not be available to them also?

The second point is that, unfortunately, many of the claims for benefits are weakened through being unsupported by strong evidence. Research into the effects of study support is frequently subject to selection bias and other schemes seem not to have been systematically evaluated. Breakfast clubs are a good example – a number of claims have been advanced for their value, and demand for them amongst parents is high – but it is not clear whether these demands stems from breakfast clubs' being convenient for parents needing to be at work early, from the nutrition they offer, or from other factors. Perhaps we are in danger of replicating the situation in the US where, to borrow a phrase from US research, 'enthusiasm and rapid growth is running far ahead of the research base' (Fashola, 2000).

With the exception of impact on the labour market, which has been well researched, strong and systematic evidence of benefits is needed before any of

the benefits of out of school care can be regarded as conclusive. Research is ongoing, however, through studies such as that being conducted by a team at the National Foundation for Educational Research to evaluate the New Opportunities Fund. When they are complete it is likely that they will add valuable information.

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